

JAMES JOYCE: BIOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT FOR READING

OR--HERE'S ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT HIM



JAMES JOYCE: AUTHOR BACKGROUND (1882-1941)

- ☐ BORN IN DUBLIN, IRELAND, 1882 DURING TIME OF BRITISH OPPRESSION, ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, AND FAMINE
- ☐ CAME FROM DECLINING MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY OF MORE THAN A DOZEN CHILDREN, EVENTUALLY REDUCED TO POVERTY BY FATHER'S DRINKING AND GAMBLING
- ☐ RECEIVED A CLASSICAL EDUCATION STRONGLY ROOTED IN CATHOLICISM UP UNTIL COLLEGE
- ☐ WHEN HE ENTERED UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, HE REJECTED HIS RELIGION AND NATIONAL HERITAGE

JOYCE: AUTHOR BACKGROUND CONT'D

- CAST HIMSELF AS AN ALIENATED WRITER RATHER THAN A TYPICAL CITIZEN OF DUBLIN (WHO HE THOUGHT LIVED A LIFE OF MEDIOCRITY AND SELF-DECEPTION)
- JOYCE LEFT DUBLIN FOR PARIS TO STUDY MEDICINE; DIDN'T RETURN UNTIL 1903 WHEN MOTHER DYING OF CANCER; MET NORA BARNACLE AND LEFT WITH HER IN 1905 AND LIVED REST OF THEIR LIVES IN EUROPE (EVENTUALLY MARRYING AND TWO CHILDREN) UNTIL JOYCE DIED OF PERFORATED ULCER IN 1941

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: JOYCE AND IRELAND

- ❑ IRISH NATIONALISM AND INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER BRITISH EXPLOITATION
- ❑ NATIONALISTS: MOSTLY CATHOLIC; FAVORED A UNITED IRELAND ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT OF BRITAIN; INTERESTED IN PRESERVING AND RENEWING IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
- ❑ UNIONISTS: MOSTLY PROTESTANT; FAVORS MAINTAINING TIES BETWEEN IRELAND AND BRITAIN (SPECIFICALLY NORTHERN IRELAND: PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM)
- ❑ JOYCE ALSO BELIEVED THE IRISH WERE UNABLE TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REPRESSION THAT CAME FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

HISTORICAL CONTEXT CONT'D

- JOYCE'S DUBLIN COMPOSED MOSTLY OF LOWER TO MIDDLE-CLASS CITIZENS OPPRESSED BY FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, FOREIGN (BRITISH) POLITICAL DOMINANCE, RIVAL IRISH NATIONALIST GROUPS, AND THE IRISH CATHOLIC CHURCH. THESE LEFT THE DUBLINER WITH FEW OPTIONS FOR PERSONAL FREEDOM, AND THUS COMES JOYCE'S THEME OF PARALYSIS.
- LATE 1800S: IRELAND (CATHOLIC DOMINANT) RULED BY BRITISH MONARCHY (PROTESTANT). BRITISH ALSO TENDED TO VIEW THE IRISH AS UNEDUCATED, SUPERSTITIOUS, AND POOR (WHICH MANY WERE DUE TO AFOREMENTIONED CIRCUMSTANCES).



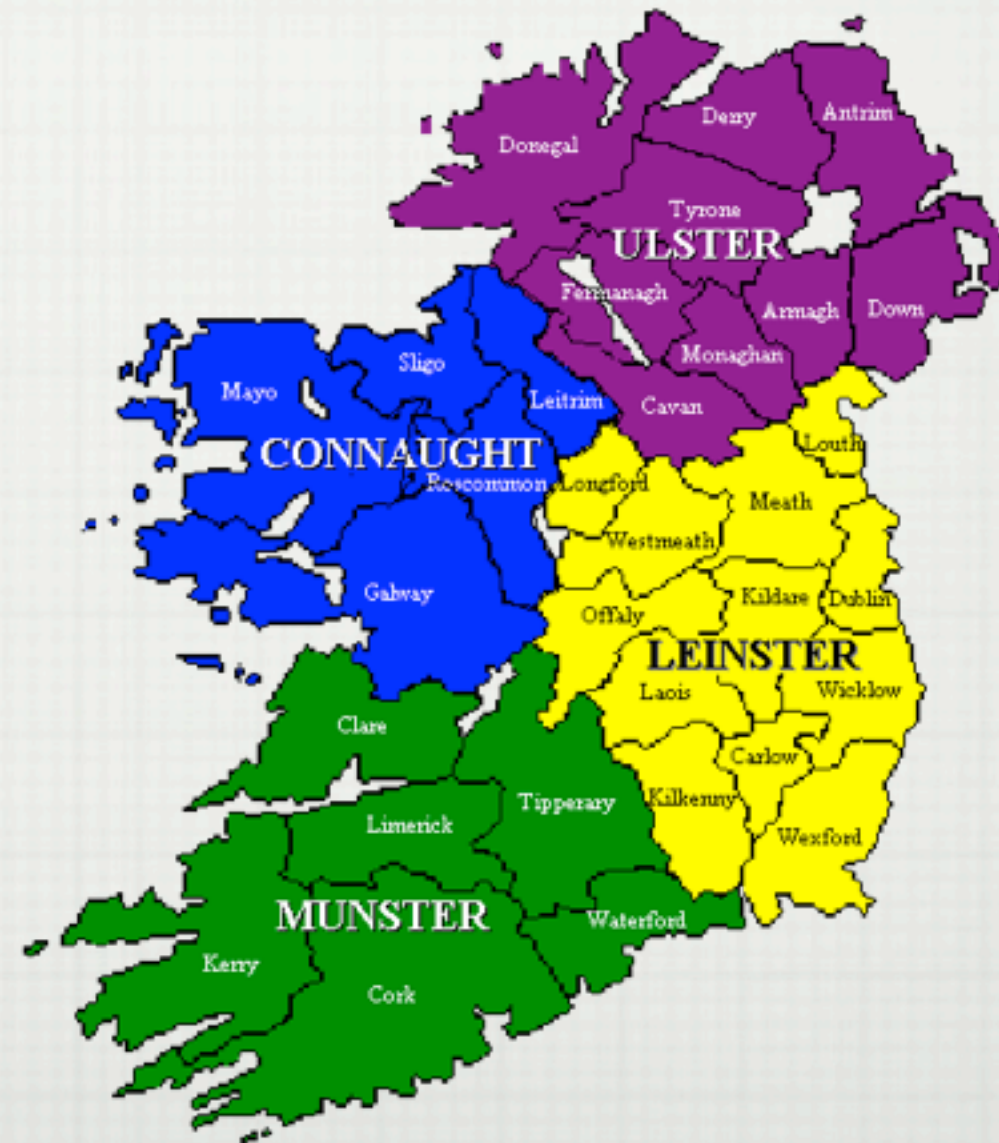
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- DURING 1880S, CHARLES STEWART PARNELL, AN ADVOCATE OF IRISH HOME RULE, GAINED POLITICAL STRENGTH. HOWEVER, IN 1889 THE DISCLOSURE OF A ROMANTIC SCANDAL SULLIED PARNELL'S REPUTATION, AND HIS OPPONENTS DISCREDITED AND WEAKENED HIM (HE DIED IN 1891).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CONT'D

- TURN OF THE CENTURY DUBLIN, AS PORTRAYED BY JOYCE, IS STILL HAUNTED BY PARNELL'S GHOST AND THE PROMISE OF IRISH INDEPENDENCE THAT DIED WITH HIM. (CONSIDER THE STORY "THE DEAD" FROM DUBLINERS)
- ADDITIONALLY, THE IRISH CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS A POWERFUL FORCE IN THE LIVES OF MOST IRISH CITIZENS, BUT JOYCE REBELLED AGAINST ITS POWER. HE BELIEVED THE CHURCH DID TOO LITTLE TO FREE IRELAND FROM BRITISH RULE AND POVERTY, AND DID TOO MUCH TO IMPOSE CITIZENS' SUBSERVIENCE.

JOYCE'S IRELAND CONT'D







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12102. - SACKVILLE STREET & O'CONNELL BRIDGE, DUBLIN.

JOYCE'S WRITING

- "HEROIC ACTION SEEMED REMOTE AND THEATRICAL TO...JOYCE...FOCUSED ON THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THEMSELVES"
- DESPITE JOYCE'S ANTIPATHY TOWARDS IRELAND (AND CHOICE TO LEAVE IT) HIS WRITINGS ALL FOCUS ON THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE.
- TENDS TOWARD HEAVY USE OF SYMBOLISM AND RELIGIOUS AND CLASSICAL LITERARY ALLUSIONS. BEGINNING WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST UTILIZED S.O. CONSCIOUSNESS NARRATION (ESPECIALLY AFTER PORTRAIT, IN ULYSSES)

JOYCE: DUBLINERS

□ JOYCE'S FIRST MAJOR PUBLICATION IN FICTION (1914)

□ CONSISTS OF 15 STORIES ABOUT CHARACTERS WHO STRUGGLE WITH OPPRESSIVE MORALITY, ROUTINES, RESTLESS DESIRES, AND INABILITY TO ESCAPE FROM THEIR ENVIRONMENT. COMMON SUBJECTS OF THE STORIES RELATED TO THESE FACTS (ALIENATION/ LONELINESS; PARALYSIS; RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION; CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION)

□ MOST OF THESE CHARACTERS ARE ON THE BRINK OF A REALIZATION ABOUT THEMSELVES, KNOWN AS AN EPIPHANY

□ EPIPHANY: A SUDDEN REALIZATION OR AWARENESS OF THE SELF; JOYCE DEFINED IT AS A "SUDDEN SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION...OF THE MIND ITSELF".

JOYCE: DUBLINERS CONT'D

- JOYCE ON DUBLINERS: "[MY GOAL] WAS TO WRITE A CHAPTER OF THE MORAL HISTORY OF MY COUNTRY"
- HE FOCUSED ON DUBLIN AS THE REPRESENTATIVE CITY BECAUSE, TO HIM, IT WAS "THE CENTER OF PARALYSIS."

WORKS CITED

- ☐ "A CULTURAL CASE STUDY: JAMES JOYCE'S 'EVELINE'".
- ☐ "DUBLINERS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND". ENOTES.COM. GALE CENGAGE: 2002.
- ☐ "DUBLINERS: INTRODUCTION". ENOTES.COM. GALE CENGAGE: 2002.